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ABSTRACT

This study guide is written to assist the candidate preparing to take New York State College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations. This booklet offers some suggestions on how to successfully complete an independent study project, learning to do many of those tasks normally performed by a teacher. It is divided into the following sections: (1) preparing for independent study, (2) study methods, (3) recognizing and correcting study problems, (4) resources and further assistance, (5) reviewing and self-testing, and (6) the examination. (Author/CKJ)

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how to study independently

a guide for students preparing to take
College Proficiency and
Regents External Degree Examinations

College Proficiency Examinations
and Regents External Degree Programs

99 Washington Avenue - Room 1919
Albany, New York 12230

May 1976

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CPE/REDE

New York State Education Department
Room 1919, 99 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12230

For information about testing outside New York State, please write to:

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The Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York determines the State's educational policies, establishes standards for maintaining quality in the schools, incorporates colleges and universities, approves and supervises academic programs leading to college degrees, licenses and establishes standards for most professions, and confers diplomas and degrees. Because of its extensive experience in the evaluation of colleges and their curriculums, the Board of Regents is recognized as an official accrediting agency by the United States Office of Education. The Regents have a central role in education in New York State and under their supervision and leadership major steps have been taken to expand post-secondary educational opportunity. In a society which increasingly demands academic credentials as proof of competency, the Regents recognize that methods must be developed to acknowledge the accomplishments of those who have acquired college-level knowledge and skills by means other than traditional classroom study.

COLLEGE PROFICIENCY AND REGENTS EXTERNAL DEGREE EXAMINATIONS

College Proficiency Examinations offer people a chance to earn college credit, an external degree, or certain other advantages without attending college classes. This program was begun in 1963 to meet the needs of people who have acquired college-level knowledge, but in unconventional ways such as through job experience, courses taken in the military or independent reading.

There are now more than 25 examinations in college subjects in the arts and sciences, education, health, nursing, and criminal justice. Some 25 other tests, Regents External Degree Examinations, are available in nursing, business, and foreign languages. All of these tests are developed and graded by faculty from colleges and universities in New York State, and grading standards are set by giving the tests to groups of college students.

Some of the ways that College Proficiency Examinations can be used are: to earn college credit, to satisfy New York State teacher certification and New York City teacher licensure requirements, to meet requirements for a Regents External Degree, and to qualify for promotions, salary increases, or new jobs.

Most colleges and universities in New York State and a growing number in other states accept credits earned through College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations. Over 80,000 credits have been granted for these examinations since 1963.

Regents External Degree Examinations, which are given in the fields of nursing, business, and foreign languages, are designed to correspond to particular levels of a person's academic preparation, and not necessarily to the subject matter of a specific college course. Where it is necessary, the External Degree Registrar will help colleges to determine the appropriate amount of credit to give for Regents External Degree Examinations.

Both College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations can be used to satisfy requirements for a Regents External Degree. Another frequent use of these examinations is to meet New York State teacher certification or New York City teacher licensure requirements.

Eight external degree programs are currently offered by the Regents: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, two associate degrees in Nursing, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Information about External Degree Programs and ways to earn credit toward them is available from the College Proficiency Examinations/Regents External Degree Program office.

HOW TO STUDY INDEPENDENTLY

This study guide is written to assist you as a candidate preparing to take New York State College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations. This booklet offers some suggestions on how you might successfully complete your independent study project, learning to do many of those tasks normally performed by a teacher. It is divided into the following sections:

- I. Preparing for independent study
- II. Study methods
- III. Recognizing and correcting study problems
- IV. Resources and further assistance
- V. Reviewing and self-testing
- VI. The examination

I. Preparing for Independent Study

Candidates begin independent learning programs with a great variety of background experience or competency levels. You may be unfamiliar with a subject, and your independent study may be an effort to learn a new subject area. On the other hand, your background in the examination subject may include practical experience, technical ability, and even course work. Whatever the case, bear in mind as you evaluate your previous preparation, that most fields are constantly changing. The material you learned a few years ago may need to be expanded or updated. Your practical experience and technical competencies are, of course, of great value, but you must remember that most examinations also require the understanding of and ability to apply general principles. Your knowledge of the field should be up-to-date, and it should include theory as well as practical information. The content outlines printed in the RED/CPE program catalog, and the study guides available for each examination will allow you to evaluate your present preparation in terms of the examination's coverage of the subject. Even if you were recently enrolled in a conventional course, you should realize that you may have to develop some new study techniques in your independent project. The examination requirements are reasonable but rigorous,

and you will have no teacher or mentor to judge your capabilities week in, week out. The examination alone will evaluate your competency. Therefore, as the program catalog states, "the person seeking credit-by-examination should be prepared to perform above the minimum expected of the on-campus student." You must learn to set your own goals and meet them without the usual external checks and pressures of homework, class recitation, quizzes, or papers.

Regardless of employment and educational background, most new examination candidates will find independent study a real challenge. This guide, therefore, recommends some precision and structure in the student's approach to the independent project. Since much time and effort may be spent on perfecting new study techniques, as well as on learning new material, it is recommended that candidates not attempt to study for more than one or two examinations at first. If you have not been involved in independent study before, you should probably follow the guide's suggestions fairly closely, and in order.

Making a Personal Study Plan

You're probably eager to begin your project right away. Before you plunge into any serious reading, however, you should spend a few hours in preparing for your task. This period of preparation is by no means time wasted. Formulating precise plans, systematically and imaginatively, will more than pay off later. You can't afford to spend your time re-reading or confusedly trying to decide what to do next, during those last few days before your examination. A well thought-out plan at the beginning will help you to avoid needless repetition and wasteful confusion. If you are already pressed for preparation time, of course, you may have to shorten or eliminate study steps that would allow better preparation under more ideal conditions.

There are many worthwhile things you can do before you begin your intense study, but your primary goal during this period may be to set up your *personal study plan*. A study plan is a chart or schedule that shows well-defined activities or goals assigned to each day or to certain hours of each day. For teachers, making lesson plans is an integral part of their teaching duties. As an independent student, you must assume this responsibility as your own. It is quite easy to make a lesson plan, so let the formulation of your own plan be your first main goal to be reached.

In order for you to draw up your own lesson plan, you will need two things: (1) a study schedule and (2) a reading list compiled by using the CPE/RED examination content outline and study guide.

Study Schedule

Study experts advise against trying to decide upon a study schedule without first having some good proof of how you actually spend your time. To gather your proof, keep a time use chart that records your daily activities over a period of time. It will note both what you did and the hour at which you did it. By keeping such a chart, you will be able to determine realistically what periods during the week will be most convenient and suitable for serious study.

To make a time use chart, mark off on a sheet of paper a vertical column for each day of the week, and a horizontal column for each hour that you are awake. A sample chart appears below. At the end of each day, write down what you were doing at each hour of that day. If you can remember them, you might note also those activities that lasted less than an hour, such as commuting or watching a television program.

Please note that the following Time Use Chart and 12-hours-per-week Personal Study Plan constitute an *ideal* example only. Candidates approach examinations with a great variety of background or preparation. Considerably less (or more) study time may be needed in your case. Many students have to be satisfied with less study time than they really "need" to prepare fully for their tests.

Do not, at this point, modify your daily activities to correspond with an ideal day you may have in mind. You want to know how your days normally unfold. Your final study schedule will certainly demand some changes in your daily schedule. However, these changes need not be overwhelming or totally disruptive of your normal life.

When your time use chart covers a period of a few days, you must decide what free hours during the week will best serve your study requirements. "Free" time is, as you know, a fuzzy term. The hour between three and four in the afternoon is no freer for the mother whose children are returning home from school than it is for the woman on duty at work. There are many periods during a week which, although not spend actively doing necessary tasks, are nevertheless important in maintaining good relationships and a healthy atmosphere. But if you are ever going to find the time you

Sample Time Use Chart with study periods indicated

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00		Rise, Eat Breakfast					
8:00		COMMUTE (TRAIN & SUBWAY)					
9:00	Breakfast	WORK	WORK	WORK	WORK	WORK	Breakfast
10:00	Church						~~STUDY~~
11:00							
12:00 Noon	Family, Post with kids						Chores
1:00		LUNCH					Lunch
2:00	Dinner watch TV	WORK	WORK	WORK	WORK	WORK	~~STUDY~~
3:00	~~STUDY~~						
4:00							Chores, Family
5:00	~~STUDY~~						
6:00	SUPPER	COMMUTE (TRAIN & SUBWAY)					
7:00	Family, FREE TIME, watch TV	Dinner, play with kids					Supper
8:00			Handball				Free Time, Social life, etc.
9:00		~~STUDY~~	~~STUDY~~	~~STUDY~~	~~STUDY~~	~~STUDY~~	
10:00							
11:00							

need, you will have to take a hard, objective look at just how essential the more unstructured hours of your day are.

For example, let's assume that you can find a total of 12 uncommitted hours a week for your study. This figure is the classic one used by enrolled college students for the total time they can devote to each three credit course; it includes class attendance. We will also depend upon the experience of many college students and assume that the most profitable unit of time to spend on any one subject is a period of not less than one, not more than two hours. The 12 hours, in other words, are best divided into between six and eight sessions per week. Of course, if time is short before you have to take an examination, you may have to devote more than 12 hours to study each week. On the other hand, if you are sure that you have more than a beginner's grasp of the subject matter, you may get by with

less time for study. But be careful. The mastery of college-level material requires serious application.

If you are not working outside your home, and have no children at home during the day, you will, of course, have a greater choice of good study periods. In making your choice, pay special attention to mid-morning and mid-afternoon, avoiding those times immediately following the departure of your family, and those just before their return. Perhaps you can find an hour and a half available every weekday afternoon. The remaining four or five hours might be found on the weekend, or on two or three mornings during the week. Commuting hours may also be useful reading time, and they have the added advantage of conditioning you to concentrate in noisy surroundings.

If you are regularly employed, most of your free time will probably be on Saturday and Sunday. Remember that it is best not to concentrate all of your study in a few marathon sessions. At least at first, many students find it best not to attempt to study for more than two hours at any one time. If you can find three two-hour periods during your weekend, you will have discovered about half of your weekly time requirement. Now, try to locate four one-and-one-half-hour periods during the rest of the week. Do not schedule study time immediately after an activity requiring great concentration or tiring work. Although it may seem natural to begin and end activities on the hour or half-hour, it needn't be so with your study schedule.

Once you have decided upon your study periods, make a new time use chart, and mark these periods off distinctly. By displaying it prominently now, you will remind yourself, and, more importantly, those around you of the requirements of your undertaking and the seriousness of your intention.

Having determined the most suitable study periods during the week, you must set up your complete study schedule. Begin by counting the number of weeks remaining until the examination date. If possible, set aside one or two weeks at the very end for intensive review. Now, on a separate sheet of paper for each of the weeks left, write the exact dates of each of the study periods within that week. You will now know how many study periods you have in which to accomplish your study goals. For example, if there are still three months before the examination, and you intend to use the last two weeks reviewing, you will have about ten weeks for study. More specifically, you will have about 60 study periods available for com-

pleting your work. If you have less than three months left before the examination, you may have to cover the same amount of work in fewer study periods, or you may have to devote more time to intensive study in each period available to you.

When your complete study schedule is written down, with each study period marked off and dated, you are ready to coordinate your detailed reading list with it.

Reading List

Recording your daily activities will not, of course, take up much of your time. During your initial planning, you should dedicate much more of your effort to preparing a list of readings whose content you should master in order to pass the examination. Such a list is most efficiently prepared by using CPE/RED program *outlines* and *study guides*.

Content outlines for most College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations appear in the back pages of the CPE/RED program catalog, available upon request from the Program Office. By looking over the breakdowns of examination content provided by these outlines, you can determine which aspects of the subject you are expected to know for the examination. You can probably determine which areas are familiar territory and which will need considerable study.

College Proficiency and Regents External Degree *study guides* are available upon request for most of the tests. The study guides provide study approaches and a list of suitable texts and other materials to aid your exam preparation. Sometimes sample questions are also provided. Since they are revised periodically, be sure to request a current study guide in order to be certain that you have an up-to-date guide for the current form of the examination.

By using the outlines and study guides, you will be able to prepare a reading list, consisting of both "required" and "recommended" readings, broken down according to subject subdivisions in the outline. The study guides often provide helpful descriptions of each book's strengths and weaknesses, and describe several alternate tests from which you can choose. Many of the guides recommend that you read more than one text in order to become better acquainted with different approaches and vocabulary. Ultimately, your choices will depend upon your particular background and interests

as well as which books you are able to obtain; but keep in mind, if not in hand, the catalog content outline as you draw up your reading list.

The public, college, or even industrial or specialized libraries in your area may have copies of the suggested texts which you can examine. Suggestions for using the library and other learning resources are provided in the "Resources and Further Assistance" section of this guide; you may find it helpful to read that section before you begin to search for books and other study materials.

With the help of your study guide and by comparing the prefaces, introductions, and final summaries of suggested texts, you should be able to choose the best texts for your independent study. Do the level of sophistication and general approach seem appropriate to your needs and abilities? Check the tables of content to be sure that the texts cover all or most of the major content areas in the study guide outline. As you skim through a text, try reading a few paragraphs closely. Also, note how the author presents his material within a chapter. Well-defined units with section headings will be of great assistance later when you review. Many texts today contain practice essay questions, case problems, and sample objective tests. These are especially beneficial to the independent learner. While many of these features will be described in the study guide, you may want to compare a few texts to decide which will be most helpful to you. In all cases, be sure that you select the most recent edition of your chosen text. Your choice of other books or articles will depend greatly upon your background in the field. Concentrate, at this point, on those most likely to strengthen specific weaknesses in your preparation.

When you have decided upon which texts and supplemental readings you will use, draw up your reading list. Your list should be as specific as you can make it. Occasionally, the CPE/RED study guides will recommend texts that cover all sections of an examination content outline, but it is often possible to break down large units of material into smaller ones. Usually, listing individual chapters and articles will suffice. You might even want to include page references with each item. Put the reading units down in the order suggested in the content outline provided in the program catalog. Some of the CPE/RED study guides will have already broken down the readings by outline section for you. Your reading list will be

complete when you have a precise list of reading assignments under each topic, in the order of their relative importance.

Combining your study schedule and reading list into a Personal Study Plan

When you have your study schedule mapped out and your list of readings compiled, you are ready to coordinate the two into a tentative study plan. Your goal is to assign specific items on your list to specific dates on your study schedule. If you are lucky, the number of reading assignments will be fairly close to the number of study periods. More likely, however, you will have to do some careful combining or dividing of assignments in order to fit them into the schedule. Try to allow for differences in time needed to skim over familiar materials or to study difficult materials closely. Some of your estimates may prove inaccurate as particular readings take more or less study time than you had budgeted. You may have to adjust your study plan accordingly, but you're still better off having an overall plan of study.

What about leaving some periods free, in case you need to do some extra research in a particular area later, or want to do some review and self-testing for a change of pace? While you might set aside a few such periods, keep them to a minimum. A study period without a definite goal too often tends to weaken your study efforts on the days before it; when it arrives, it is too easily wasted on spur-of-the-moment superficial study. As for review and self-testing, you do not really need to dedicate whole periods to them, until the last few days of intense review. Until that time, both review and self-testing should be integral parts of your daily study pattern.

Having coordinated your study schedule and syllabus, you have accomplished your first major goal: to draw up your personal lesson plan. You have transformed those large, perhaps awesome goals, such as "pass the examination" and "read a text" into a series of smaller goals, well defined and manageable. Be sure you have noted on your lesson plan the deadline for making application to take your examination. In fact, you should apply well in advance of the deadline, if you can. Write to the College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Program as soon as possible for a current application form; return the completed form promptly. The deadline is usually about six weeks before the examination date.

II. Study Methods

Although study techniques will obviously vary as you study, for example, history, literature, or mathematics, a few suggestions seem generally applicable to reading explanatory textbooks.

A typical study session should probably be a miniature version of your complete study schedule. That is, it should include a brief period of preparation, a long period of intensive study, and finally a period of review and self-testing.

Preparation, in this case, means getting an overview or general idea of what the assignment covers. It's a well-known fact that most students show a dramatic increase in both speed and comprehension of most subjects when they have a general notion of what to expect in the material they're about to study. The time needed for a preliminary reading will decrease as your skills improve. Even at first, you probably won't require more than ten minutes to look over a chapter. Begin by reading carefully the introduction to the chapter or article; then continue, rather slowly, page by page. Pay special attention to paragraph and other section headings, and follow the order in which the author is presenting his material. Words in italics or boldface type are signals for you to stop for a moment. If there is a summary at the end, you should read it with care. Don't take notes during your preliminary reading.

Many students find they can retain more of what they read if they approach an assignment personally and with a rather definite purpose in mind. One way to do this is to formulate questions whose answers you will look for as you read. At first you may rely on the questions that appear at the end of many chapters, or simply convert section headings into questions. Soon, however, you will want to make up your own.

With your preliminary reading completed and your questions formulated, you are ready to study the assignment. It is unlikely that you will have time to go through each reading twice, so your study must be intense and thorough the first time. Of course, you shouldn't set out to memorize the text. In general, your goal is to master the principal concepts, their importance, and their applications. Some fields will demand a good knowledge of facts, dates, and terminology as well. Others will require sensitivity to literary or

aesthetic qualities. Your study guide will help you to assign the proper priorities in developing your factual and analytical competencies.

As you study your assignment, you may wish to take notes. These might consist of key words, lists of dates or fictional characters, or whole sentences. Include the answers to the questions you made up, and any new ones you formulate as you read. Get into the habit of using a clear, consistent form in your note-taking, making major headings and subtitles easily recognizable. Don't plan on expanding them later. The words and categories you use should be your own, as much as possible, so that when you review the assignment, you will have two points of view. On the other hand, don't try to memorize everything or to take exhaustive notes. Most people learn and retain more—and enjoy their learning more—when they read closely but don't take too many notes or consciously try to memorize each detail.

Good note-taking skills are especially important in your reading of journals and other supplemental materials you don't own. Usually you'll have to depend upon these notes alone in your review. Most subjects are best handled by study notes kept in a notebook. However, some students also use small cards for important dates, vocabulary, rules, and names. You can carry these cards in your pocket and skim through them when you have a few free minutes after lunch or on the bus. One busy mother studied for her nursing examinations by reviewing note cards pasted on the refrigerator and cupboards.

After studying, review both the reading assignment and your own notes. Skim through the reading, again looking out for titles, heading, underlined words, and glancing at any illustrations and charts. When you come across a section whose main facts or central points you can't quickly recall, then—and only then—stop and re-read. Review your notes in the same way, beginning with your key words and major headings.

The last part of your study period is for self-testing. If your text includes quizzes or discussion questions at the end of the chapters, use them. Be sure you can answer the questions you posed earlier. Ask yourself how the material of the previous lesson relates to that of the one you've just finished. Try writing a summary of the assignment's main points. Self-testing helps you to judge how effective the entire study session has been. If you can answer most of the test questions or respond with confidence to the sample problems, you've accomplished your day's goal.

III. Recognizing and Correcting Study Problems

Obviously you can't wait until the review and self-testing period just before the examination to judge your ongoing performance. Nor can you, as a student in an independent learning program, count on a teacher to keep you on schedule and check your progress. Therefore, you must learn to recognize your study problems as quickly as possible, and modify your lesson plan and study habits in order to correct them.

If you're dissatisfied with your day's study performance, try to determine what section of your study was the weakest. Generally, weakness in a particular part of your procedure can be overcome by greater efforts in the part before it. For example, if you're unable to answer the test questions, you may need to review more thoroughly. Constant re-reading during your review suggests poor reading skills or lack of concentration. If your reading takes too long, spend more time on your preliminary reading or "skimming" and on formulating your questions.

If you find yourself falling behind often on your lesson plan, it may be that the text you chose is too advanced. You must then quickly select another more on your level. If your rate of reading is very slow, a quick solution would be to add another study period. Refer to the time use chart you've been keeping. If the total hours you spent in actual study does not equal the time you set aside during the week, find out where those important minutes were lost. Look for patterns. Were there many late starts and early finishes? This might suggest that your activities before and after your studies are preventing you from keeping to your schedule, and rescheduling may be the answer. Remember to incorporate any changes in your reading list or schedule into a new lesson plan. Did your family and friends interrupt often, or is the television in the next room distracting? If threats and pleas are ineffective, consider changing the location of your study sessions, perhaps to the library or another quiet place.

More often, however, careful recollection will reveal that you have initiated disruptions in your study yourself, by taking a coffee break, making a phone call, or catching a glimpse of a television program. Study interruptions can also be caused by daydreaming during the time of intense reading. Some students, having identified their problem as one of lack of concentration and perseverance, can muster the self-discipline required to overcome it. For many others,

it is more effective to set up a system of external rewards (e.g., an hour of television, a cigarette, or a favorite dessert) to reinforce self-discipline and to modify study habits. As you draw up your own reward system, bear in mind that if your rewards are too remote or your pace is too demanding, you'll only become more discouraged. Don't attempt to correct all of your problems at the same time. Begin with what you feel is your major problem. See if the attitude or activity you want to change can be broken down into small components. Rewards can be established for very specific tasks, such as beginning on time; for improving skills, such as orderly note-taking; and for more general accomplishments, such as finishing a week's assignment. Work on each component separately, set a minor goal of expectation and modification, and reward yourself every time you reach it. With practice, you'll learn how to recognize your problems and best adapt your reward system to correct them. Whatever the problem you are trying to correct, don't increase the requirements for rewards too quickly or too much. Changes in your study habits are more likely to become natural and permanent if they occur easily and gradually.

IV. Resources and Further Assistance

Although independent students ultimately bear the responsibility of helping themselves, there are many sources of assistance in the community and elsewhere. You may already have in mind some people or study aids that would be of help. Be imaginative in determining what and where these potential learning resources are; be judicious in when and how you use them.

Advice

Especially at the beginning of your project, you may have questions concerning the general requirements for your examination. If you can't find the answers in the program catalog, write to the Advisement Office, College Proficiency Examinations/Regents External Degrees, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12230. There are advisors on the staff who can counsel you on the proper procedures and overall requirements.

In addition to the staff of the Program Office in Albany, there are over 150 volunteer advisors and counselors throughout New York State whom you might contact. They, too, can provide you with in-

formation on a wide range of educational experiences. The Program Office can furnish you with a list of their names and locations. Many of them are affiliated with educational institutions and agencies, such as colleges or public libraries. Remember that these advisors are not mentors or teachers. They can clarify the program for you and perhaps offer some suggestions on how you might approach your particular project. They cannot, however, prepare a specific, individualized study plan for you, or test your progress along the way. If you live outside New York State, you may find librarians or educators in your vicinity who have a particular interest in assisting independent learners.

Instruction

You may wish to incorporate non-credit course work at a nearby college, adult education center, or community education site into your independent study plan. Before you enroll in any course, however, be sure that the course syllabus covers all or most of the examination content outlined in the program catalog. If the course requires much time and effort, and only partially treats your subject, it may not be worth your while.

You may find suitable correspondence courses offered by extension divisions of accredited colleges. The National University Extension Association (One Dupont Circle, Suite 360, Washington, D.C. 20036) offers, for a nominal fee, a booklet listing approved home study courses. If you decide to take a correspondence course from a non-accredited institution, be careful to choose a good home study course and avoid organizations who provide little for the fees they charge. Unfortunately, some programs or publications offered by profitmaking concerns sometime purport to be sponsored by or affiliated somehow with our programs. The College Proficiency Examination and Regents External Degree Programs do not sponsor, endorse, or require any home study materials, institutional programs or courses of study.

In any case, be sure to check that courses cover the subject content *at the proper level* before you enroll in them.

Libraries

Probably the greatest single learning resource available to you is a library. By all means visit a nearby library, introduce yourself to the librarian and mention your independent study project. In many

ways, your librarian can be very helpful to you; by suggesting alternate titles for books you can't obtain, by assisting you to learn of the library's layout and services, by helping you to borrow books through inter-library loans, and in other ways.

You will find the library a more useful resource if you take the time to familiarize yourself with its physical arrangement, services, and materials. You should probably spend some time looking through the card catalogs. Every book is listed by author, title, and general subject matter, so you can look up any of these as a starting point. There may be separate catalogs for other materials, such as journals and records. Some cards record more information than others, but all will give the author, title, date, and publisher for each entry. And all cards will have an identification number. Most libraries organize their books by either the Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress numbering system. Your librarian can explain how to find the books you need, under either classification system.

Dewey Decimal System

The Dewey Decimal System was developed in 1873 by Melvil Dewey, who later became Secretary to the New York State Board of Regents. Incidentally, Dewey advocated credit by examination and external degrees almost eighty years before they became a reality in the 20th century. In brief, the Dewey Decimal System catalogs books under ten groups. Each group is assigned members as follows:

Number	Main Division	Subdivision
000-099	General Works	Almanacs, encyclopedias, bibliographies, magazines, newspapers. Materials that cannot be narrowed to a single subject.
100-199	Philosophy	Logic, history of philosophy, systems of philosophy, ethics, and psychology.
200-299	Religion	Sacred writings (the Bible), mythology, history of religions, all religious and theologies.
300-399	Sociology (Social Sciences)	Group dynamics, law, government, education economics.
400-499	Philology (study of Linguistics)	Dictionaries dealing with words (not of biographies), grammars, and technical studies of all languages.

500-599	Science (Subject and Theoretical)	Astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, mathematics, physics, etc.
600-699	Applied Science (Useful Arts)	Agriculture, all types of engineering, business, home economics, medicine, nursing, etc.
700-799	Fine Arts (Professional and Recreative)	Architecture, painting, music, performing arts, sports, etc.
800-899	Literature	All types of literature-drama, essays, novels, poetry, etc.—in all languages of all countries.
900-999	History	All history, biography, geography, travel, etc.

Each of the ten groups is subdivided, so that you can easily find the library's collection in your subject area and browse through its holdings. For example, books, numbered 800-899 are general works about literature; 820's are English literature, 821 denotes English poetry, and 822's are English drama, and so on up to 829.99. English poetry subdivides further to 821.1 for early English poetry, and each subdivision indicates a specific period of English poetry up to 821.9. After using the card catalog to find one book in your general subject area, you can soon find the location of the section where books on that subject are shelved.

Library of Congress System

The more modern Library of Congress System of classification uses letters instead of numbers to designate the main divisions of knowledge. Subdivisions add a second letter and numbers. The major categories are:

Letter

- A General Works
- B Philosophy and Religion
- C History-Auxiliary Sciences
- D History-Topography (except American)
- E-F American History-Topography
- G Geography-Anthropology

H	Social Sciences
J	Political Sciences
K	Law
L	Education
M	Music
N	Fine Arts
P	Language-Literature (nonfiction)
Q	Sciences
R	Medicine
S	Agriculture
T	Technology
U	Military Science
V	Naval Science
Z	Bibliography and Library Science
P-Z	Literature (fiction)

Biography and Fiction are usually shelved in a separate section. Fiction is arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. Some libraries use "F" or "Fic" plus the first letter of the author's last name.

Biography is usually designated by B or 92. Some libraries use 921 for individual biographies 920 for collective biographies. The B and 92 classifications are followed by the first letter of the subject's last name. Thus, a biography of Benjamin Franklin is coded:

B 92
or
F F

After a few trial runs with either system, you'll soon be moving easily throughout the library, tracking down the materials you want. If you bring your study guide to the card catalog, you can quickly ascertain which titles are among the library's holdings. If you can't find a title you need, the librarian can probably suggest a comparable text as a substitute.

In New York and in most other states, you can easily arrange to borrow books that your library does not own through inter-library loans. Spend some time browsing through the reference room. In addition to the more standard general encyclopedias and dictionaries, check out handbooks or dictionaries dedicated specifically

to your field. Some of these are listed in CPE/RED study guides in such subjects as Anatomy and Physiology or Freshman English, for example.

Find out what guides and indexes to periodical literature are available. They will list articles dealing with your topic and indicate in which journals or newspapers they can be found. You can look up information in many periodical guides under alphabetical listings of authors, titles, or subjects.

Check also any other card catalogs in the library. It is a good way to discover other non-book materials available. You may be surprised to learn of the many other educational tools your library offers; foreign language, music, and dramatic readings on records and tapes; films, slides, and other visual programs and aids; and perhaps television cassettes with programmed instruction.

Other resources

Browsing through a large bookstore is a good way to learn quickly the most popular and controversial authors and books in your field. Bookstore managers often pride themselves on keeping up on recent developments in many fields. They can help you with your bibliography, and they often know of others in your town who are interested in your general subject.

If your examination requirements include language or practical laboratory competencies, you'll need to find appropriate facilities where you can acquire these skills. Upon learning of your independent study plans, teachers or technicians at local colleges, secondary schools, or industries may allow you some opportunities to gain laboratory experience. Community colleges may be particularly helpful, since they are often strongly oriented, as a matter of policy, to serve area residents, whether or not they are enrolled in the colleges.

On a day-to-day basis, a spouse or close friend can be of great help to you, especially if they are creative listeners. Try explaining to them regularly what you have learned. This is an excellent exercise not only for recalling facts, but for simplifying complex concepts and organizing many ideas in your mind. Encourage your friends to ask you questions, and try not to be angry if they ask the wrong ones. Learn to say "I don't know" and to verbalize how you might approach a solution from a different point of view. When teachers refer to teaching as a "learning experience," they usually have in

mind that common experience of having a student's questions or comment open up new perspectives and approaches they hadn't considered before.

In looking for others who might help you with the content of your project, think of those people whose professions touch upon your field: a college or high school teacher of the subject, a nurse or businessman, perhaps. If you are having difficulty not with the content but with your study methods and habits, you might contact someone whose occupation involves instruction, such as a local teacher or a military base educational officer. Prepare yourself before you contact these people. When you go to see them, take along your lesson plan, notebooks, and texts.

V. Reviewing and Self-Testing

If you've followed your lesson plan faithfully, you should have finished studying your texts and supplementary readings about two weeks before your examination. The last study sessions will be most effective if no new material remains to be covered. You will probably need time now, as you did in your daily reviews, for some re-reading. This can be a period of excitement and challenge, since it offers you the opportunity to bring your mastery of the material not merely to a passing level, but to one that will reflect a thoughtful and personal approach to your study.

To be sure that you accomplish all of your review and self-testing in the allotted time, you may want to draw up a lesson plan for these weeks. Perhaps a week dedicated to review and another to testing would be a proper goal for you.

The purpose of your review is to freshen your memory, and to relearn those important areas you have completely forgotten. Your review period is, therefore, an expanded version of your daily review periods. Your goals and procedures are similar, although the greater amount of material to review may require you to concentrate more upon text and note headings, reading whole paragraphs and subtopics only when necessary.

Practice making up both multiple-choice and essay questions before and during your review. Make them challenging enough. By now, your daily practice with this exercise and your familiarity with the subject will make the procedure easy. As you review, think of ways to bring many separate items together in your mind. What are the general trends, patterns, and categories that might help you to

relate seemingly different facts and concepts? Can you remember the main two or three points of the chapter you are about to review? Ask yourself how the author of this chapter and the author of an article on the same subject differ in their approaches and conclusions.

During your review, go through your study guide and examination content outline again. Re-read the introduction and any sections on objectives or preparation. Review any sample questions carefully. If your guide or outline includes a topical survey, use it as a source for questions.

Be sure to review your notes carefully. Some students even spend a part of their review time in rearranging or condensing their notes. Your early notes, in particular, may have been too long or poorly organized. But don't go back and take new notes on your reading.

If you do have time to rearrange your notes, you might try bringing together notes from different sources, according to topics or historical periods, or categories based upon your own interests. Your time is limited, so be very selective in what you re-read. Study intensely only those parts of your assignments whose content you can't recall even with the help of your notes.

Your week of self-testing should lead you naturally right up to your final examination. The primary purpose of this self-testing is not to discover your weaknesses; an effective review will have done this. Rather, it is to give you practice in taking examinations, answering questions, writing essays, and solving problems. Here again, you are basically expanding to a week's activity something you have done daily.

VI. The Examination

College Proficiency and Regents External Degree Examinations are prepared by a committee of experienced educators in the field, and the tests have been normed on college students who have completed equivalent course work. While it is ideal to have a perfect score on all parts of the examination, remember that you are not competing against perfection, but rather against the scores made by college students who participated in previous tests.

About a week before the examination date, you'll receive an examination admission slip by mail. Bring this slip with you to the examination, together with your pens and pencils. Don't forget to bring along a watch. If you can, arrive a little early, so that you can familiarize yourself a little with the room and atmosphere.

When you receive your copy of the examination, read the instructions carefully. Make a quick calculation of the total time, and the time you can afford to spend on each part. You might subtract a half hour from the total time allotted, for reviewing your answers at the end. Then simply divide the time left by the number of parts in the examination. If the different parts are not of equal value, your calculation will have to take this into account. Once you have determined how much time is available for each part, make up your mind not to go beyond the limit. When the time allotted for a question is over, stop and go on to the next.

There are many different ways to approach an examination. Some students like to read through the entire examination before they begin. Some set up their own order, beginning with the test questions they think will be the easiest. If, however, you are likely to worry about a difficult question in advance, don't read the entire test at first. Instead, follow the order given.

Some examinations include more than one kind of question. In all cases, read and re-read the instructions until you are absolutely sure you understand them. Don't waste time and effort writing about something that does not pertain to the question asked. In answering the short, "objective" questions, be sure to keep up your pace. If you can't answer a particular question quickly, come back to it later. In answering essay and problem-solving questions, remember that it is not enough simply to list major facts and concepts. To give them their full meaning, you must present them in a logical sequence, with their relationships and significance clearly explained. So take a few minutes before you write, gather your thoughts, jotting down the principal points you want to include, and perhaps make a brief outline to follow as you write. Essays are the perfect occasions for you to show the imagination and critical abilities you brought to your study.

When the time you set aside for reviewing arrives, go back and check your work. Quickly re-read each set of instructions. If you haven't finished an essay, do so now. Make sure your sentences and paragraphs are complete, and look for spelling errors. When you review objective questions, don't change an answer unless you're sure it is wrong. First choices are usually right. Usually there is no penalty for guessing on the objective portions of the examination (check instructions *carefully* before beginning); therefore, you are encouraged to select what you think is the best answer for each question. Try not to leave any questions unanswered.

If you are like most students, you'll feel somewhat let down when you have turned in your examination. Few of us are ever totally satisfied with our performance on tests. But the difference between self-condemnation and a feeling of at least some self-satisfaction often lies in knowing that we have done our best in preparing ourselves for the examination. If you've done your best, feel rather satisfied with your answers, and can resist the temptation to spend the time sleeping, have yourself an enjoyable, relaxing day. Surely you have earned it.